

Director and State Public Health Officer

Karen Smith, MD, MPH



On March 23, 2015, Karen Smith, MD, MPH, was sworn in as director of the California Department of Public Health and state public health officer. Dr. Smith is a physician specializing in infectious disease and public health. Prior to her appointment, Smith served as public health officer and deputy director at the Napa County Health and Human Services Agency beginning in 2004. She was also on medical staff for infectious disease at Queen of the Valley Medical Center in Napa from 2012 to 2014.

She served as clinical faculty at the Santa Clara County Valley Medical Center Division of Infectious Diseases from 1997 to 2004. Smith served as assistant section chief at the California Department of Health Services Tuberculosis Control Branch from 2000 to 2001 and was a faculty consultant for the Francis J. Curry International Tuberculosis Center at the University of California, San Francisco from 1997. Dr. Smith held several positions at the Stanford University School of Medicine from 1992 to 2004, including resident, fellow and international health course director. Smith also served as TB Controller and Deputy Health Officer for Santa Clara County from 1997 to 2004.

Dr. Smith completed her medical training and infectious diseases fellowship at Stanford University after having obtained a Master of Public Health degree at Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public health. Prior to her medical training, Smith served in the Peace Corps as Public Health Laboratory Director for the Marrakesh Province in Morocco and at the Wichienburi Regional Hospital in Thailand.